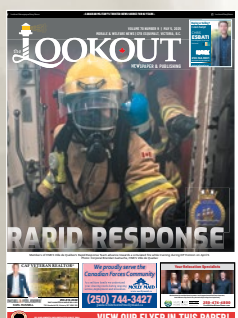




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the LOOKOUT

2025

IN REVIEW

West Coast Navy highlights as told by *the Lookout*

Archana Cini
Lookout Newspaper

From the docks of Esquimalt to deployments far beyond Canada's shores, 2025 was a year defined by momentum on the West Coast. Across Canada's Pacific Fleet, sailors, civilians, and families came together for moments that showcased readiness, resilience, and community.

In 2025, the *Lookout* covered more than 100 of these important stories. Together, the highlights below form a broader story of service, connection, and pride between our West Coast, Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), and Defence communities.

JANUARY

- His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Protecteur* is named at Seaspan Shipyards, Vancouver
- All eight Orca-class training vessels sail together for the first time during Photographic Orca Deployment Exercise 2025 (PODEX25)

- Exercise Roguish Buoy unites Canadian combat divers with Naval Reserve and Latvian divers

FEBRUARY

- The Royal Canadian Logistics Service (RCLS) marks its 57th anniversary of service
- Annual Wounded Warrior Run raises over \$235,000 in funds for trauma-exposed organizations, professionals, and their families
- B-Jetty officially opens at HMC Dockyard
- Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt Tritons men's basketball team secures the 2025 Canada West Regional Men's Basketball Championship and the CFB Esquimalt Women's hockey team secures the 2025 Women's Hockey Canada West Championship
- Naden Band of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) performs with Katy Perry at the 2025 Invictus Games

MARCH

- The Maritime Forces Pacific (MARPAF) Health and Wellness Expo empowers local Defence community with a tailored showcase of products and services
- Victoria residents gather to honour Canadian lives lost in Afghanistan
- British Columbia (B.C.) Cadet Honour Band leaves lasting impact across the province with music tour
- HMCS *Ottawa* returns home
- Sailor 1st Class (S1) Sterling Fox recognized as Sailor of the Year for 2024
- HMCS *Harry DeWolf* halts 26.9M in illegal narcotics

APRIL

- First ever cohort of Marine Systems Technicians (MSTs) graduate
- HMCS *Corner Brook* deploys
- Local fire departments participate in memorial hockey weekend and raise over \$10,000 for BC charities

*The Year
in Review
continued
on page 4*

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VIEW COUNTRY GROCER'S LATEST FLYER SAVINGS IN THIS PAPER!

COUNTRY GROCER

HOURS IN THE PACIFIC:

The Rescue of RCN Sailor 1st Class Matt Blades

In December, S1 Blades fell overboard from a RHIB, plunging into the ocean near the southern tip of Vancouver Island and setting off a rescue mission

Archana Cini
Lookout Newspaper

One moment Sailor 1st Class (S1) Matt Blades was at the helm of a RHIB. The next, he was fighting for his life in the Pacific.

"My whole thought process was that they're either going to find me, or there's nothing else I could have done," said S1 Blades.

What followed was a rescue effort that left S1 Blades, his rescuers, and the local community with a deeper appreciation for training, teamwork, and the fragility of life at sea.

S1 Blades and his wife S1 Margaret Blades met some of his rescuers, Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell, Commander of MARPAC, and Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (CPO1) Jonathon Sorensen, to thank the team and share more about his experience — just five days after his near-death experience.

The incident occurred east of Bentinck Island, where S1 Blades was operating a Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) as part of his sentry duties with a fellow sailor.

"The waters were getting pretty choppy, so I actually tuned the radio [on the RHIB] to channel 16 in case someone fell overboard," said S1 Blades. "Obviously, this was unknowing that it would eventually be me," he laughed.

S1 Blades fell overboard at approximately 2:40 p.m. into rough waters amid stormy conditions.

"I was coming up over a wave when another one hit me and made me lose my balance," he shared. "With that, I fell overboard and took the kill switch with me."

The kill switch of a RHIB is a critical safety device intended to immediately stop the vessel's engine if the operator is accidentally separated from the helm. This prevents a runaway vessel as well as potential accidents. However, S1 Blades was pulled from the RHIB and, given the day's conditions and water currents, was unable to return to it.

At approximately 2:45 p.m., a mayday call was received by Search Mission Coordinator John Millman of the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre (JRCC).

"I asked the sailor who made the call if he could see S1 Blades in the water," said Millman. "He said, 'No, I watched him go under.'"

With more than 42 years of experience working for the Coast Guard and the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre, Millman then began to estimate where the RHIB could be located. To do this, Millman utilized the shape of the shore; current and wind information; and data from the caller to begin narrowing down a search location.

"The person in the water is affected by the surface, which



Royal Canadian Navy leadership, Sailor 1st Class (S1) Matt Blades and his wife S1 Margaret Blades (centre), and his rescuers (on right and back) pose for a group photo during their meeting five days after S1 Blades' rescue. Photo: Rodney Venis, CFB Esquimalt Public Affairs

is affected by the wind, but not so much by the wind itself," said Millman. "Knowing it was a very windy day and there was low visibility in the water, we conducted drift modelling and gave them [rescue teams] a sector search pattern to work with. Pretty soon, we actually had a sighting of the RHIB."

The team searching for S1 Blades and the RHIB included: a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter; a Cormorant helicopter; His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Regina*; an RCN Orca-class patrol vessel; a CC-295 Kingfisher aircraft; and the Canadian and United States Coast Guard.

Once the RHIB was located, crews then began to search the area for S1 Blades.

At approximately 5 p.m., S1 Blades was spotted in the water by Major (Maj) Dennis Mann from the Cyclone aircraft — right in the middle of the estimated sector search pattern provided by Millman.

"He [S1 Blades] was quite adamant to get my attention," said Maj Mann. "It really was a full crew effort to get me to the right spot where I was able to see him. I just happened to be at the right side of the aircraft when we went by."

S1 Blades was then rescued aboard the closest vessel, the Pacific Guardian from Pacific Pilotage Authority, a civilian company boat that also responded to the mayday call, and immediately transferred to local emergency services. S1 Blades had spent over two hours in rough, frigid waters.

When asked what factors led to S1 Blades' rescue, Maj Gregory Clarke from the JRCC said, "Ultimately, the JRCC doesn't rely on luck."

"We approach a search and rescue (SAR) mission to the best of our ability with experience, tools, procedures, methods, manuals, and our crews," said Maj Clarke. "We use drift modelling, thermal cameras, infrared scanning, night vision goggles, and so much more when it comes to finding someone."

Millman and Maj Clarke also explained the concept of functional time.

"Functional time is the time that someone can be expected to help themselves in a scenario like this. After accounting for what we thought S1 Blades was wearing and the conditions of the day, we predicted this to be 4.0 hours," said Millman.

"How long we search for someone is at least twice, if not three times the functional time," explained Maj Clarke.



Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell presents a Commander MARPAC/JTFP coin while shaking the hand of Major (Maj) Dennis Mann, who first spotted Sailor 1st Class (S1) Matt Blades in the ocean during the rescue.
Photo: Lindsay Groves, Lookout Newspaper

“So, we were prepared to search all night long — we weren’t even contemplating suspending the search by the time S1 Blades was rescued. Vessels were preparing to refuel and come back out on scene to search, something we call bingo time.”

Since the incident, S1 Blades has made a full recovery. For those involved, the rescue was a testament to the professionalism and detailed science underpinning modern SAR. From the sailor who made the mayday call to the coordinated tasking of multiple aircrafts and vessels, every part of the response was honed by training, technology, and teamwork.

At the reunion, Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell, Commander of MARPAC/JTFP, presented those involved in the successful SAR mission with a Commander MARPAC/JTFP Coin, thanking them for their service.

“We owe you a tremendous amount of thanks,” he said. “We answer around 2,500 SAR calls a year, but there’s something different when it’s one of ours we recover. Thank you for saving a life this week.”

When S1 Blades was asked by RAdm Patchell if he had any fears about going back aboard a RHIB in the future, he replied, “Oh no, none at all.”

The contrast is striking: S1 Blades’ rescue came just four months after a very different moment at sea — his July 2025 wedding to his wife S1 Margaret Blades, also conducted aboard a RHIB.

Ultimately, this rescue will be remembered for its human impact: on the RCN sailor who survived, his loved ones waiting, and the rescuers whose dedication and excellence ensured he survived.

“Merry Christmas!” S1 Blades posted on Instagram on Dec 25 alongside a photo of him and his wife with RCN leadership and the rescue crew. “And thanks to those who made it so! God bless you all, to another year of doing our purpose!”

Sailor 1st Class (S1) Margaret Blades, wife of S1 Matt Blades, hugs Major (Maj) Dennis Mann, the rescuer who first spotted her husband in the ocean.

Photo:
Lindsay Groves,
Lookout Newspaper

“Thank you for saving a life this week”

~RAdm David Patchell, Commander of MARPAC/JTFP



2025 IN REVIEW continued from page 1

- Naden Band of RCN collaborates with University of Victoria (UVic) music students in a moving concert
- The local Defence community unites in memory of the sinking of HMCS Esquimalt

MAY

- Marine artist John M Horton opens exhibition at Maritime Museum of BC with over 30 renowned Canadian mar-

ine and RCN commissioned paintings

- Victoria gathers to remember and honour those who served Canada during the Battle of the Atlantic
- HMCS *Calgary* celebrates 30 years of service to Canada
- Over 140 Vancouver Island locals participate in annual Navy Bike Ride
- Indigenous Awareness Week sparks learning and appreciation at CFB Esquimalt

JUNE

- Operation (Op) REGULUS brings New Zealand musician to join Naden Band for the first time in a decade
- CFB Esquimalt celebrates Pride Month with a variety of related events, volunteer work, and learning opportunities
- 19th annual Navy Run sees over 590 registered runners and raises over \$3,800 for Soldier On

JULY

- Collaboration with Toquaht Nation powers Canadian Armed Forces to effectively execute Exercise TRIDENT FURY 2025
- LIBYA 2011 battle honour is awarded to HMCS *Vancouver*
- Victoria Cenotaph marks 100 years of service on the grounds of the BC Legislature
- Command of MARPAC passes from Rear-Admiral (RAdm) Christopher Robinson to Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell

AUGUST

- RCN announces decision to pay off Kingston-class Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDVs)
- Exercise GOLDRUSH 2025 builds international partnerships and vital skills in the Pacific Northwest region
- RAVEN Program holds formal graduation ceremony at CFB Esquimalt to celebrate summer graduates
- RCN accepts HMCS *Robert Hampton Gray* as the sixth and final vessel in a new fleet of *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPVs)
- Prime Minister Mark Carney visits Canadian Forces Maritime Experimental and Test Ranges (CFMETR) in Nanoose Bay
- HMCS *Max Bernays* sets a record for furthest point North reached by an RCN ship

SEPTEMBER

- Formation Fun Day hosts hundreds of Defence community members for a day of carnival-style fun, food, and games
- 13th annual Base Commander's Golf Tournament brings friendly competition to Defence team members and community partners
- Naden Band marks 85th anniversary of bringing music to the navy
- HMCS *Ships Brandon*, *Whitehorse*, and *Saskatoon* are decommissioned at CFB Esquimalt
- Mental Health and Wellness Strategy (MHWS) Culture Evaluation Tool Launches across units
- HMCS *Corner Brook* returns home
- Defence on the Dock brings the vessels, people, and trades of the RCN to local island communities for a day of exploration and fun

- Ship to Shore Industrial Tradeshow showcases cutting-edge technologies, products, and services from industry suppliers
- DND team successfully reactivates a remote Arctic refueling facility in Nanisivik

- New display at CFB Esquimalt Naval and Military Museum honours late naval commander Peter Godwin Chance

NOVEMBER

- DND apartment complex acquired by government and announced to house Defence team members near CFB Esquimalt in 2026
- Indigenous Veterans Day is observed on Nov 8 and Remembrance Day is observed on Nov 11 with ceremonies held across Greater Victoria
- Band of the 5th (British Columbia) Field Regiment participates in annual Concert of Remembrance
- RCN commemorative event at CFB Esquimalt bids farewell to the Steward trade

DECEMBER

- Naden Band performs at its 47th annual Holiday Show and supports Salvation Army with toy drive
- Offshore Oceanographic Science Vessel (OOSV) *Naalak Nappaaluk* announced to serve Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) in 2026
- Bay Street Armoury renamed in honour of Canadian war hero General Sir Arthur William Currie

Here's to 2026!

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Sailing into 2026 with the RCN: Rear-Admiral town hall recap



LCdr Michelle Scott
MARPA

In November, Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell, Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (CPO1) Jonathon Sorensen, and Formation Master Sailor (MS) Haley LeClair held a series of command town halls for the Formation. While not every question and answer is captured here, these questions highlight the predominant themes of housing, security, and force generation.

HOUSING

Q: How is the Navy addressing housing challenges for our sailors, soldiers and aviators, especially as we work to grow the force and accommodate those on the Basic Training List?

A: We recognize that housing remains one of the most pressing challenges. At present, inventory of housing on Base is insufficient, and we are committed to addressing this gap through multiple approaches. New infrastructure projects are underway, including the soon-to-start construction of multiplexes, the purchase of a condominium building at 244 Island Highway, and we are exploring additional options to meet the needs of our members. We are also working closely with local communities to ensure there is adequate housing in the surrounding area. With over 1,800 personnel on the Basic Training List, accessible and affordable lodging for these members is a priority. In the interim, services like the MFRC housing coordinator help connect members with rental opportunities.

Q: What is being done to improve infrastructure and maintain morale and retention while major projects like the Nelles Block replacement and the new mess facility are still years away?

A: We know that infrastructure limitations and delays affect morale and retention, and this is a shared responsibility across all levels of leadership. Construction on Nelles Block replacement is scheduled to begin in summer

2026, which includes a new mess facility which we expect to be ready in 2030. This, along with construction of additional accommodations on Colville Rd over the next few years, and multiplex housing projects are clear indications that we are working to improve living conditions for our members, soonest. The impact of each of these infrastructure projects, such as on parking and fitness and welfare capabilities such as the soccer pitch, outdoor volleyball court, outdoor track, etc, are all being planned as part of these projects to ensure we continue to offer the best access we can concurrent to preparing for the growth of our Force. In the meantime, leaders will focus on building strong teams, managing individuals as people, and leveraging available time to improve and sustain operational readiness. In order to retain our exceptional sailors, we need to ensure a sense of purpose and belonging.

Q: Are housing benefits like the Canadian Forces Housing Differential (CFHD) being applied fairly, and what steps are being taken to address inequities and expand housing capacity for members?

A: We know that housing benefits, such as the CFHD are not applicable to all members; sailors, soldiers, and aviators living in Residential Housing Units (RHU)s are currently ineligible. These issues are under review and have been raised with senior leadership, including Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Chief of Military Personnel. While posting allowances help offset relocation costs, we also expect members of the Canadian Armed Forces to move periodically to gain breadth of experience and to ensure service requirements are met. At the same time, the government has provided a pay raise, and we owe Canadians a Navy that is ready to defend our country. To meet that commitment, we need to invest not only in personnel, ships, and training but also in infrastructure. We are pursuing innovative solutions to expand housing capacity, including purchasing land, homes, and even warehouses where building new infra-

structure is not immediately possible. Some RHUs have been renovated, but rising rents remain a concern. If accommodations are falling short, we need to hear about it: your feedback is essential to ensure housing remains fit for purpose.

SECURITY

Q: With AEGIS coming online, what changes are expected in our security posture, and how are we preparing for cyber threats and information warfare?

A: We anticipate significant changes to our security posture, similar to the measures already being implemented for RCAF's future fighter programme. This includes upgrading physical security systems, such as moving from basic ID cards to swipe card access at Bases, to increased security for sensitive areas. At the same time, cyber resilience is a top priority. New software solutions are being introduced, though validation will take time, and cyber defence will be embedded into training programs to ensure sailors can recognize and respond to threats. We are also investing early in the Information Warfare domain, creating a new Naval Warfare Officer sub-branch called Information Warfare Officer (IWO) and developing sailors who are experts in network defence. These steps will help us build a cadre of experts while maintaining the ability to operate effectively in communications-denied environments.

Q: What is being done to address delays in security clearance processing, and how will this impact training and readiness?

A: Security clearances remain a challenge, particularly for permanent residents, whose files take longer to process. While most of our sailors are meeting timelines and starting courses on schedule, we recognize the need to improve overall throughput. To address this, DND has hired additional civilian staff in Ottawa and expanded CAF-wide capacity for clearance processing. Security clearance checks must be done properly, and we will not compromise their

integrity; however, the majority of sailors are not missing training because of clearance delays. Our focus is on accelerating the process without sacrificing security, ensuring that members can begin their courses on time and contribute to operational readiness.

Q: Where will AEGIS training be conducted, and how will we ensure access for our personnel in the coming years?

A: For the foreseeable future, AEGIS training will be conducted in the United States. Currently, five RCN personnel are posted to the United States to pursue AEGIS training and gain practical experience on AEGIS systems, with plans to scale this approach. Over the next five to ten years, Canada will develop our own training capability which will be located within the CTIC(A) and CTIC(P). The goal for RCN AEGIS training is to share validation responsibilities with our U.S. partners. Until then, sending sailors, soldiers, and aviators south remains essential, and opportunities for additional personnel to participate are still available.

FORCE GENERATION

Q: How is the RCN maintaining momentum on shipbuilding and capability development while managing resource challenges and operational priorities?

A: The RCN is committed to maintaining momentum on shipbuilding and capability development. While AEGIS represents a significant advancement, future platforms such as the new corvettes will be built in Canada using Canadian systems to strengthen national capacity. Scaling back shipbuilding is not an option; the government is fully invested, and we must sustain that commitment. At the same time, we recognize the need to prioritize tasks. If there are activities that do not contribute to core readiness, we encourage feedback so we can focus on what truly builds capacity. We are looking at ways to increase sea days closer to home and optimize train-

ing schedules to ensure operational effectiveness.

Q: What steps are being taken to address personnel shortfalls, improve recruitment and training, and ensure standards are maintained as the Navy grows?

A: Our personnel shortfall is significant—currently about 1,900 sailors, but with a goal to close that gap by 2028. By 2040, the Navy must grow to two-and-a-half or three times its current size, which requires aggressive recruitment and training strategies. There are 4,500 Reservists across Canada, and some will want full-time service while some Regular Force members may seek part-time roles.

Recruitment remains a challenge. Programs like NCM-Step are under-filled, and we are exploring ways to break down barriers and accelerate entry. While the Navy will be bringing in a significant number of new sailors, we are not lowering standards, we are motivating this next generation of naval warfighters. We must maintain the ability to fight, float, and move, and accountability is critical. Instructors play a vital role, and we expect them to be engaged and committed to training excellence. Course critiques are encouraged to ensure time is valued and standards are upheld.

Q: How is the RCN balancing the need for a strong military force with the growth of the civilian workforce, and what is being done to expedite hiring and fill critical gaps?

A: Building a strong Navy also requires a strong civilian workforce. Organizations like Fleet Maintenance Facility (FMF) Cape Breton and CFB Esquimalt provide essential capability, and we are hiring. We need to grow both military and civilian teams to meet future demands. Hiring more public servants is essential but will take time; we are looking at ways to expedite hiring and fill gaps without compromising safety or readiness. Ultimately, our priority is training and inspiring the next generation of sailors while building a robust support structure across the entire Defence Team.

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THE LOOKOUT TEAM

CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER
Lindsay Groves
lindsay.groves@forces.gc.ca

PRODUCTION
Leslie Eaton
eaton.leslie@cfmws.com

WRITER/DIGITAL MEDIA COORDINATOR
Archana Cini
archana.cini@forces.gc.ca

ADMINISTRATION AND ACCOUNTS
Andrea Modesto
250-363-3127
andrea.modesto@forces.gc.ca

ADVERTISING
Joshua Buck
778-977-5433
military.base.advertising@gmail.com

Danielle Sutton
778-400-1866
forces.ads@westcoastmarketing.net

EDITORIAL ADVISORS

Lt(Navy) Wilson Ho
250-363-4006

Rodney Venis
250-363-7060

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HMCS *Regina* in 2025: A Year of Readiness, Resilience, and Warfighting Excellence

Lt(Navy) Gareth Scott
HMCS *Regina*

As His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Regina* closes out another demanding and rewarding year at sea, the ship's company can look back with pride on a period defined by operational success, rigorous force generation, and a deliberate commitment to cultivating excellence in readiness, resilience, relevance, and lethality. From multinational exercises to cold-weather operations and high-tempo training serials to meaningful community engagement, *Regina* seized every opportunity to learn and grow as a team.

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Regina's year began with a focus on sharpening tactical proficiency and enhancing interoperability. The ship's participation in the Submarine Commander Course (SCC) off Hawaii provided an excellent opportunity to work alongside United States (U.S.) Navy submariners and surface forces in one of the most advanced Underwater Warfare exercises available. Operating from Pearl Harbor, the crew supported demanding anti-submarine warfare scenarios and gained experience in high-pressure environments while reinforcing the ship's role as a capable, combat-ready asset.

TRIDENT FURY 2025, the Pacific Fleet's marquee joint and combined exercise, was another outstanding training step towards High Readiness. Operating off the coast of British Columbia (B.C.) alongside Canadian, American, and Mexican units, *Regina* executed live-fire serials, advanced maritime interdiction operations, and multifaceted warfare scenarios across the air, surface, and sub-surface domains.

Operation (Op) LATITUDE took *Regina* north, into the Gulf of

Alaska. The ship crossed the Arctic Circle, operated with U.S. Coast Guard assets, attached to a U.S. Carrier Strike Group, and visited Dutch Harbor and Anchorage. The deployment demonstrated the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) ability to project presence into the Arctic region, contribute to maritime domain awareness, and collaborate with partners in a strategically vital theatre. Despite unpredictable weather and demanding sea states, the crew displayed exceptional resilience and adaptability, key hallmarks of a combat-credible warship.

HIGH-QUALITY TRAINING: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF LETHALITY

Throughout the year, *Regina* placed significant emphasis on Force Generation — the essential work of preparing sailors to fight, sustain, and win at sea. The ship exercised closing-up and responding to scenarios at Action, Emergency, Rescue, and Emergency Flying Stations, ensuring every department maintained the proficiency needed to respond decisively in a crisis.

These serials were not routine drills. They were deliberate investments in warfighting readiness. Operators refined weapons procedures and engagement planning, technicians honed their ability to contain damage and restore capability, and Bridge teams rehearsed navigation under high-stress conditions. Whether simulating fires, system failures, or missile engagements, every evolution reinforced the crew's ability to protect the ship and deliver lethal effects when required.

Particular emphasis was placed on developing mental and physical resilience, recognizing that a modern combat ship demands sailors who can absorb stress, adapt to uncertainty, and perform at peak levels under pressure. Through fitness initiatives, leadership develop-

ment, and scenario-based training, the ship fostered a culture that balances toughness with teamwork — a culture built on respect, accountability, and mutual trust.

The year culminated in Intermediate Multi-Ship Readiness Training (IMSRT), a comprehensive assessment that challenged *Regina* across all warfare, engineering, and seamanship disciplines. Through numerous scenarios ranging from multi-threat engagements to emergency response serials, the crew demonstrated measurable growth in precision, communication, and lethality. Successful completion of IMSRT certified *Regina* as a high-readiness ship and the flagship of the West Coast Fleet.

PORT VISITS: STRENGTHENING MORALE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Between operational and training achievements, *Regina* enjoyed memorable port visits that strengthened international relationships and provided well-earned rest for the crew. Stops in Pearl Harbor, Vancouver, Dutch Harbor, Anchorage, and San Diego highlighted the breadth of the ship's operating area and provided tangible opportunities to engage with allied militaries, communities, and local cultures. Notably, twice this year, *Regina* welcomed the people of Vancouver during Fleet Week and the Marine Career Expo.

A CULTURE OF PURPOSE, GROWTH, AND READINESS

Every milestone achieved this year reflects a ship's company dedicated to improvement — professionally, operationally, and personally. By embracing the mission to cultivate readiness, resilience, relevance, and lethality, *Regina* built a foundation that will serve the RCN well into the year ahead.



His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Regina*. Archive photo

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His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Max Bernays* sailed into its home port on Dec 19, marking the end of a four-month deployment that spanned the Arctic and Indo-Pacific regions under Operations (Op) LATITUDE, HORIZON, and NEON.

The crew and their loved ones were thrilled to be reunited. Even the weather seemed happy to see them together as the sun came out on a rather rainy day just as the crew disembarked.

Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell, Commander of Maritime Forces Pacific (MARPAK) and Joint Task Force Pacific (JTFP), was on the jetty to welcome them home, stating, "It is a crew of exceptional sailors supported by absolutely amazing families," he said. "They're home in time for the holidays for a well-deserved break."

The *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessel (AOPV) made history during Op LATITUDE by reaching 81° North, the farthest north any Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) vessel has ever sailed. This milestone demonstrates Canada's growing ability to operate in the High Arctic, and reinforces our sovereignty in a region of increasing global importance.

"It is incredible. It is barren. It is breathtaking," said Commanding Officer of the ship, Commander Nadia Shields. "It is ice as far as the eye can see, and I would say that the Arctic is something that we def-

initely need to protect." Following its time in the Arctic, *Max Bernays* sailed to the Indo-Pacific, visiting ports in Alaska, Hawaii, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea as part of Op HORIZON. Under this operation, the ship joined multinational exercises including SAMA SAMA 2025 and ANNUALEX 2025. These activities helped Canada build strong partnerships and work more effectively with allies as part of its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

The vessel and its crew also supported Op NEON, Canada's contribution to enforcing United Nations Security Council sanctions against North Korea. As such, HMCS *Max Bernays* worked with partners such as Japan, South Korea, and the United States to stop illegal activities and support international law.

"From achieving a historic milestone in the Arctic to contributing to security and stability across the Indo-Pacific, HMCS *Max Bernays* has shown exceptional versatility and professionalism," said RAdm David Patchell. "This deployment highlights our ability to operate in some of the world's most challenging environments while advancing peace, security, and Canadian interests."

After 129 days away and over 27,000 nautical miles, the ship's company returned home just in time for the holidays. It was a proud moment for both the sailors and their families who supported them throughout this remarkable deployment.



A sailor from the company of His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Max Bernays* reuniting with a loved one.
Photos: Sailor 1st Class (S1) Kyle Maguire, MARPAK Imaging

"They're home in time for the holidays for a well-deserved break"

~RAdm David Patchell, Commander, MARPAK/JTFP



His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Max Bernays* approaches home on the cloudy winter morning of Dec 19. Photo edited

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A group photo of the Wardroom's hockey team (left) and the Chief & Petty Officers' (C&POs') hockey team (right) at Wurtele Arena on Dec 17. Photo supplied.

At Home Hockey Game at CFB Esquimalt: Wardroom vs C&POs' Mess

CP02 Michael Tibbetts
CANSUBFOR

The Naden Arena was host to a spirited and skilled hockey game on Dec 17, pitting the experienced members of the C&POs' mess vs the youthful team representing the Wardroom. Notably, the Wardroom had a secret weapon ready this year: the Father-Son duo of the Patchells, made up of Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell, Commander of MARPAC, and his son Sub-Lieutenant (SLt) Mike Patchell. The two combined on a lion share of the Wardroom's goals and offence for the match.

The Wardroom was however held in check by the hard-working C&POs' team, with a 4-4 score after the first period. In the end, the youth and speed of the Wardroom team proved to be winning, and the final score was 9-6.

The game was played hard, with sportsmanship both on and off the ice that highlighted the camaraderie and teamwork between the two messes all year long. The C&POs' mess will be looking to return the favour both on the ice and at the mess, when it hosts next year's game.

Bravo Zulu to the winning Wardroom team!



The puck drop at the third annual Glacier Kings vs First Responders/Canadian Armed Forces Charity Hockey Game held on Dec 5. Photo: John W Penner

Hockey Games Raises Over \$25,000 for Wounded Warriors Canada

Held on Dec 5, the third annual Glacier Kings vs First Responders/Canadian Armed Forces Charity Hockey Game returned to a capacity crowd at the Comox Valley Sports Centre.

With a final score of 16-13 for Wounded Warriors, the event has raised over \$25,000 (and still counting) in support of the upcoming 2026 Wounded Warrior Run BC, and its current goal of raising \$250,000 to help fund critical life-saving Wounded Warriors Canada programs for trauma-exposed professionals including, veterans, serving military, first responders and their families who are dealing with Operational Stress Injuries such as PTSD. The event was organized by Comox RCMP members Rob Brennan, Debi Sargent, and Christina Horns, and supported by the Comox Valley Glacier Kings and over 130 local businesses and sponsors.



Contribute to the Wounded Warriors fundraising goal at woundedwarriors.ca/run-bc/

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Justin, UAV Operator to Construction Labourer



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Chisholm Sword Awarded to Sub-Lieutenant Adriel Elaydo



Lookout Newspaper, with contributions by the Naval Association of Canada (Vancouver Island Branch) and Gerald Pash

Bravo Zulu to Sub-Lieutenant (SLt) Adriel Elaydo, recipient of the Merritt Chisholm Sword for Esprit de Corps and Perseverance.

Awarded to SLt Elaydo on Dec 16 at His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Venture*, the sword was presented by retired vice-admiral Jean-Yves Forcier, Chairman of the Naval Association of Canada Endowment Fund and member of the Vancouver Island Branch. Reviewing officer Commander (Cdr) Malorie Aubrey Commanding Officer of HMCS *Vancouver* also

participated during the presentation.

The sword, presented alongside a Naval Association of Canada book prize, is traditionally awarded at Naval Warfare Officer (NWO) course graduation. Its recipient is one who has generated morale, camaraderie, inclusion, resilience, and more among course participants.

SLt Elaydo first enrolled in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) at Montreal's Naval Reserve Division, HMCS *Donnacona* in March 2022. SLt Elaydo underwent basic training at CFB Valcartier before training as a Naval Warfare Officer (NWO) at HMCS *Venture* in Esquimalt beginning May 2025. He is also currently working towards a Bachelor of Economics degree at Concordia University.



Vice-Admiral (retired) (VAdm (ret)) Jean-Yves Forcier (left) and reviewing officer Commander (Cdr) Malorie Aubrey (right) presenting recipient Sub-Lieutenant (SLt) Adriel Elaydo with the Chisholm Sword for Esprit de Corps and Perseverance. Photo: Gerald Pash



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Features: On demand Hot water, private laundry in-suite, full kitchen with garburator and dishwasher. All-Inclusive: \$2,000/month covers everything (Heat and Water included). This is a smoke-free and pet-free property. We understand the military relocation (HHT) process and are happy to facilitate remote walkthroughs and flexible move-in timelines. Email: bitdraco@protonmail.com or call: 250-893-0877

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NAVY OFFICER MESS KIT SIZE 40 WITH GOLD BRAID

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WOMAN'S MESS KIT - \$100 Dark Blue woman mess kit. Measurements - Skirt - waist 27 inches, hip 38 inches, length 39 inches. Jacket - length 21 inches, shoulder width 15 inches. Blouse size 12. Asking \$100. Text 250 886 2361 if interested.

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FOSTER HOMES ARE NEEDED - People choose to become foster caregivers for many reasons, but all share a love for children and the desire to help those in need without an expectation of receiving something in return. Visit www.fosterhope.ca

FRIENDS OF ASHTON ARMOURY MUSEUM is a non-profit society made up of volunteers with a passion for military history. We are seeking volunteers. If you are interested in helping out please contact Chris Preston, at (250) 479-7634, or prestoncm@shaw.ca.

THE WITS PROGRAMS FOUNDATION is looking for a volunteer who is fluent in French with a background in elementary education to edit and review French translations of materials. Please contact us at info@witsprogram.ca for more information!

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY AND THE RESTORE

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Sailors of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) enter the Admiral's residence for a bit of warmth, coffee, and conversation on the morning of Dec 12. Photo: Lindsay Groves, Lookout Newspaper

Coffee with Rear-Admiral Patchell Draws Crowds for Holiday Warmth

Archana Cini
Lookout Newspaper

Festive conversation, laughter, and the smell of coffee drifted through the cold morning as Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell and his wife Christian welcomed guests into their home on Dec 12, 2025.

The Commander of Maritime Forces Pacific (MARPAF) graciously invited Defence team members into his historic Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt Dockyard residence for Coffee with the Admiral.

Pastries, hot chocolate, coffee, and tea were enjoyed by guests throughout the morning. Visitors were also welcomed by members of the MARPAF Health and Wellness Strategy (MHWS), who provided both free mugs and holiday cards of well-wishes.

As the year drew to a close and guests left carrying a little extra warmth, the morning served as a simple but meaningful reminder that connection continues at the heart of the local Defence community.



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